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SUBJECT: UNESCO DIRECTOR GENERAL CAMPAIGN: JORDANIAN AND INDIAN
VIEWS

REF: (A) PARIS FR 2202
(B) PARIS FR 2209
(C) PARIS FR 2220

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR LOUISE V. OLIVER FOR REASON 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During a meeting with Ambassador Oliver, the Jordanian Ambassador to UNESCO said that Egypt will move ahead with its candidate for the next Director General (DG) of UNESCO unless it decides that its candidate, Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni, would have serious difficulty getting elected. At a lunch organized by the French Ambassador to UNESCO, concerns about Mr. Hosni were expressed by Brazil, India, and Greece, while China and France repeated the fact that their countries have not yet given formal support to Mr. Hosni, as was stated in an interview given by Mr. Hosni published in the Egyptian weekly, Al-Ahram. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Oliver met with Jordan's Ambassador to UNESCO and France, Dina Kavar, on December 5 to discuss the race for UNESCO's next DG. Ambassador Oliver told Ambassador Kavar that although the U.S. could not support Mr. Hosni, it had no problem with an Arab candidate. In response to a question from Ambassador Kavar as to the reasons for the U.S. concerns with Mr. Hosni, Ambassador Oliver stressed that the U.S. was very uncomfortable with some of Mr. Hosni's public statements and the fact that he seemed to be controversial and provocative. Ambassador Oliver added that some of the comments in the introduction to an interview given by Mr. Hosni to the Al-Ahram magazine were of concern as well.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Kavar said that it was very important that the U.S. confirm the truth of its concerns, as opposed to being influenced by rumors and gossip. She added that if the concerns of the U.S. were valid and serious, a discreet conversation with the representative of the Arab League in Paris, Dr. Nassif Hitti, might be a good idea since the head of the Arab League is Egyptian. Ambassador Kavar also confirmed that Prince Hassan Bin Talal is not a candidate for the DG position, as had been rumored. (Comment: Mission strongly supports the suggestion that verifiable information relating to U.S. concerns about Mr. Hosni be provided to the Mission. After that has been done, if appropriate, Ambassador Oliver will meet with Dr. Hitti with whom she has a friendly relationship. End Comment.) The Jordanian Ambassador gave no indication as to whether she was aware of the U.S. demarche that had been delivered in Amman relating to U.S. opposition to Mr. Hosni's candidacy.

¶4. (C) Many comments concerning the DG race were made at a lunch hosted on December 5 by the French Ambassador to UNESCO, Catherine Colonna, for the UNESCO Ambassadors of Brazil, China, Greece, Morocco, India, and the U.S. When asked whether the candidacy of Senator Chrisovam Buarque was a serious possibility, the Brazilian Ambassador Joao Carlos de Souza-Gomes, replied that it was because President Lula da Silva's party was a minority in the Senate, and the Brazilian President needed to work with the Senate. However, Ambassador Souza-Gomes added that it all depended on whether Mr. Buarque could transform the support of a few Senators into a broad-based majority.

¶5. (C) The UNESCO Ambassador from India, Ms. Bhaswati Mukherjee, said that relations between India and Egypt were at a thirty year

low, and that India would look very favorably on a Brazilian candidacy, as it thought that Mr. Hosni was very provocative. The Indian Ambassador also said that it was of great concern that Jews were specifically targeted for the first time in the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai. Ambassador Mukherjee added that she understood that the Russian Ambassador Vladimir Kalamenov, also had a very negative opinion of Mr. Hosni. (Comment: Since there will be a new Russian Ambassador to UNESCO in January, it is hard to know whether the Russian position will stay the same. End Comment) When the Ambassadors of China and France were asked whether their countries had given support to Mr. Hosni's candidacy as has been claimed, both of them said that the reports were misleading and that their countries did not yet have official positions on the DG race. The Ambassador of Greece, George Anastassopoulos, told Ambassador Oliver that as President of the General Conference, he could not make public statements on the DG race, but that privately he had grave concerns about Mr. Hosni.

16. (C) COMMENT: It is obvious that as of now, Mr. Hosni does not have much support from some of the most powerful countries at UNESCO, something the Egyptians must be aware of. If the Egyptians decide to press on with their candidacy, it is likely that Mr. Hosni will begin to spend more time at UNESCO. A Latin American country like Brazil may be a good alternative, though it would probably mean adding biofuels to UNESCO's work. In addition, because of geographical rotation, Argentina's Minister of Education Mr. Daniel Filmus is supposed to be the next President of the General Conference, despite the fact that he speaks no English and almost no French. Moreover, he is not very effective as the current Chairman of the Executive Board's PX Commission, and has little interest in anything except debt relief. That would mean that Latin America would have both the DG slot and the President of the General Conference, UNESCO's two most important positions.

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17. (C) COMMENT continued: In addition, Cuba will probably continue as the Chairman of the NAM at UNESCO, and Venezuela will be the next Chairman of the G77 plus China. When Ambassador Oliver asked how Venezuela was chosen for the G77, the response was that the Venezuelans had insisted on it, and that nobody felt comfortable challenging them. The Brazilian Ambassador, who served in Venezuela for four years and worked closely with the American Ambassador during that period, shrugged his shoulders and looked at Ambassador Oliver with an embarrassed smile. The same thing happened several years ago when Cuba insisted on representing GRULAC on the Bureau of the International Program for the Advancement of Communication, UNESCO's program that promotes freedom of expression. Even though the GRULAC was embarrassed by this, the Latin American countries said that due to "bilateral reasons", they had no choice. If the U.S. promotes a Latin American candidate, it must be an individual who can stand up to regional pressure. Moreover, since it seems that the possible price for a Latin American DG might be increased influence by Venezuela and Cuba, the U.S. would have to insist on a very high-level position at UNESCO.

OLIVER